Report to the First 5 California State Commission

Statewide Evaluation Framework
Final Report

Submitted by
The First 5 Evaluation Framework Workgroup

Prepared by
Government Finance Officers Association
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JULY 11, 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Children and Families Act of 1998 created a statewide program to support, promote, and improve the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age. The Act also created the California Children and Families Commission and established that it and county commissions would administer the resulting early child development efforts. Early in the development and implementation process, the state and counties worked together to create an evaluation framework early in the initiative. Since that time, the First 5 initiative has matured and the number and complexity of state and local programs and strategies have increased and the current framework correspondingly needs to be revised to accommodate changes to the First 5 initiative.

Consequently, the State Commission and the First 5 Association sponsored an effort to revise the existing framework. They jointly created an Evaluation Framework Workgroup, charged with developing an updated framework that could meet the evolving reporting and evaluation needs of both the State Commission and county commissions. The workgroup included representatives of county commissions and state commission staff. Throughout the process there was strong collaboration between state and local workgroup members. The group developed its recommendations through consensus. The group's approach and the resulting framework are outlined in this Executive Summary and described in detail in subsequent sections of this report.

The recommended framework builds on the lessons learned from the existing framework to improve the approach in several key ways:

- Address stakeholder questions – The evaluation approach must be dynamic and responsive to the decision-making needs of State Commissioners, legislators, county commissioners, while continuing to demonstrate the value of First 5's early intervention investments to the general public. The recommended framework identifies the "top questions" that all stakeholders want to know and specifies a method for answering these questions as well as more in-depth questions about the return on investment and the impact on children and families intensively served by First 5 programs. Illustration 1.1 below lists these "top questions."

Illustration 1.1

What First 5 stakeholders want to know

- Who and how many are served?
- How much is being spent?
- On what? Who is providing services?
- Is First 5 efficient?
- What results are being achieved

- Simplify and standardize data reporting to address data consistency and validity - The proposed approach retains some elements of the existing framework and focuses on simplifying and standardizing them. It eliminates components the Workgroup concluded were not providing sufficient information on results and adds components the Workgroup believes will provide better information. The recommended approach is focused on ensuring the quality and credibility of data collected which is in part supported by reducing the quantity of data attempted to be collected. For example, the revised framework eliminates the requirement that all School Readiness programs collect client-specific data on all participants because of concerns about data consistency and validity and specifies alternative methods for evaluating School Readiness results that address data consistency and validity.

- Define clear roles for State and counties and reinforcing the partnership necessary for success - The recommended framework enhances the current process by requiring local commissions to conduct evaluation studies and provide the results of such studies to the State Commission. It also significantly enhances the State Commission's capacity to conduct focused research and evaluation by creating a "Center for Results" at the state level.

- Create a system, process and resources for ongoing evaluation and research - A critical element of the proposed framework is the dedication of resources for the development and implementation of a research and evaluation agenda. The framework recommends that the existing State research and evaluation team evolve into a more formalized structure for managing, analyzing an communicating the results from First 5 investments statewide. The term "Center for Results" refers to both the resources that will be dedicated to carryout the State's research and evaluation agenda as well as the decision-making process that will guide this effort. The purpose of the Center will be to provide better information on the impact of the First 5 initiative through independent research, such as return on investment studies, statewide longitudinal studies and case studies of selected programs and initiatives. The Center would also be charged with reviewing and analyzing the results of local programs and initiatives in order to assess statewide impact. The center will serve as the resource center collecting information from other efforts nationally to identify effective approaches relevant to the First 5 environment.

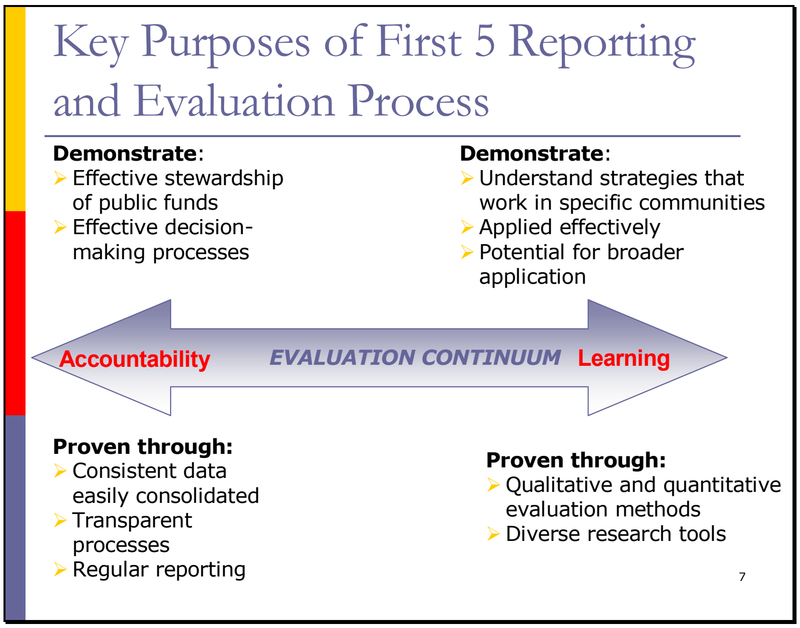
Process and Approach to Building the Revised Framework

The First 5 initiative encompasses four program categories: state programs funded 100 percent by the state, the school readiness program, which is jointly funded by the state and county commissions, county programs that are funded 100 percent by individual counties, and other programs that are jointly funded. The revised framework focuses on two of these categories: 1) 100 percent county-funded programs and 2) the jointly-funded school readiness initiative.

The workgroup began by reviewing the existing framework and related information and the results of interviews with stakeholders. It invited a panel of distinguished evaluation researchers to present information on best practices in evaluating large scale, complex initiatives such as

First 5 and to discuss the challenges associated with such evaluation efforts. Based on this information, the workgroup concluded that a revised framework needed to achieve two major purposes: 1) to provide accountability information to all stakeholders that would let them know that the procedural requirements of the Children and Families Act are being met, that funds are being managed appropriately, and that results are being achieved; and 2) to provide information for use in learning effective approaches to improve outcomes for children and to continuously increase the effectiveness of programs and strategies. The framework was then designed to serve those purposes. Illustration 1.2 below presents the logic of this approach:

Illustration 1.2



Based on their review, and particularly on the advice provided by the panel of national evaluators, the workgroup concluded that a single approach to evaluation was neither attainable nor appropriate. The multiplicity of stakeholders and their diverse information needs, combined with the diversity of programs and approaches comprising the First 5 initiative, requires a framework that incorporates multiple approaches to evaluation and reporting.

Recommended Framework Description

Two critically important criteria for assuring that the revised evaluation framework will be successful are 1) its ability to answer stakeholders' key questions (for example, about First 5's services, clients, return on investment, and results achieved), and 2) its ability to meet the requirements specified in First 5 enabling legislation. Three levels of data will be collected, evaluated and reported on in order to provide answers to different categories of questions. These levels include: 1) descriptive data; 2) outcome data; and 3) data produced through applied social research methods. Illustration 1.3 below shows these levels and how data from each level will be collected, reported and used to evaluate and report on 100% county-funded programs and jointly-funded school readiness programs.

Illustration 1-2

Three Levels of Information for Research and Evaluation		
	100% County-Funded	**School Readiness**
Level 1: Descriptive Data. Provides standardized and consistent information and formats statewide for Annual Report.	Standard reporting of programs funded, answering questions regarding • Who is being served? • How many are served? by whom? • For what purpose and how much is being spent?	Standard reporting by funded application, answering questions regarding • Who is being served? • How many are served? By whom? • For what purpose and how much is being spent?
Level 2: Outcome Data. Provides county-specific information for Annual Report and for use in targeted state evaluation studies on statewide impact and results.	Counties report local evaluation results to the State. To be used to show results of individual county efforts and as a resource for level 3 research on results statewide. Will answer questions about results in individual counties.	Counties report aggregated data from menu of standard outcomes and indicators. To be used to provide consistent results information over multiple funded applications. Will answer questions about results from individual programs and for Level 3 research and evaluation work.
Level 3: Experimental and Comparison Evaluations. Provides information for purposes of accountability, improving results, evaluating statewide impact, policy making, future strategies.	Center for Results develops and carries out research agenda and selects county programs for evaluation/review. Conduct research and evaluation efforts to: (1) evaluate impact of specific initiatives and program executed within or across counties; (2) evaluate the overall impact and return on investment of First 5 through enhanced community capacity and intensive longitudinal studies.	Center for Results develops and carries out research agenda and selects county programs for evaluation/review. Conduct research and evaluation efforts to: (1) evaluate impact of specific initiatives and program executed within or across counties; (2) evaluate the overall impact and return on investment of First 5 through enhanced community capacity and intensive longitudinal studies.

The key questions the framework is intended to answer, and how data will be collected, analyzed and reported on are discussed below:

1. ***Who is being served, how many are served, by whom, for what purpose and how much is being spent?*** These questions will be answered with level 1 data. For 100% local programs, local commissions would submit standardized descriptive and demographic information through the annual reporting process. This would include a demographic

profile of the children and families served by First 5 and the providers with whom First 5 commissions contract. For school readiness, all funded applications would be required to submit this standard aggregated descriptive information.

2. ***What is the local impact of the services on children and families served?*** This question can be answered primarily with level 2 data. County commissions would be responsible for reporting local evaluation results to the state for inclusion in the annual report. Additionally, counties would be required to conduct local evaluation studies and to provide selected studies to the state to support statewide learning about the impact of various programs and strategies. An increased local reporting effort would be required for programs funded through the State School Readiness initiative at this level. Local funded applications would be required to report aggregate data related to their specific school readiness plans. The data to be reported would be selected from a "menu" of outcomes and indicators. The outcomes and indicators to be reported would be agreed upon during the state commission's funding approval process.

3. ***What is the impact statewide of locally funded programs: what is the return on the First 5 investment; what have been the results over the long term; and what can we learn that can be used to improve results?*** These kinds of questions can be answered using level 3 information developed by the proposed Center for Results. It would review county evaluation results and results from other sources, conduct its own targeted research and compile and analyze county evaluation results in order to provide information for accountability purposes and for improving results. The center will develop a research agenda containing a variety of focused research projects to provide richer insights into services and results. Approaches will vary but are likely to include: identification of broad trends through longitudinal studies; studies that use statistical sampling to identify similar outcomes from a variety of approaches; case studies/applied research on selected programs or multiple programs; focused research on results achieved from similar strategies implemented in various areas of the state; and intensive program reviews that include extensive data collection conducted cooperatively by the state and local commissions or school readiness funded applications. Examples of how these tasks may be accomplished are provided in Section Six.

The recommended framework improves on the current process in several ways. First, it increases accountability by establishing a workable approach and format for local reporting of demographic, funding, and provider information. Second, the framework is designed to mitigate concerns about the validity and consistency of data as it is currently collected within hundreds of funded programs in the 58 counties. It incorporates evaluation results from the local level, which will provide richer information on the results of local programs and allow practitioners to improve their programs and strategies. Finally, the framework increases the State Commission's ability to answer key questions related to First 5 efforts and enhances its capacity to conduct focused research and interpret results through the previously described Results Center.

Local commission staff have provided input at various stages throughout this process. Progress reports on the proposed framework have periodically been presented to local commission staff at state association meetings. Most recently the complete recommended framework was presented at the State First 5 annual conference, where it was enthusiastically received. Workgroup members have also presented the proposed framework to community stakeholders and other local commissions in their respective regions.

Implementation

If approved, the recommended framework would be implemented in FY 06-07, beginning July 1, 2006. FY 05-06 will be the transition year. While the framework's structure will be implemented in 06-07, some elements may not be fully implemented until FY 07-08. The final section of this report presents implementation issues and a preliminary approach to implementation.

The workgroup strongly recommends that the State Commission reconstitute the workgroup as an implementation steering group to capitalize on the strong collaborative effort that has developed between the local and state commission members of the workgroup. Key tasks will be to plan and monitor the transition and implementation, establish transition guidelines, provide advice and guidance in the selection of a contractor for state evaluation, assure that support and technical assistance are provided to counties to enable them to conduct high quality evaluations, establish reporting processes and formats, work with state staff to modify the State School Readiness application process, address concerns about how best to leverage current investments in technology, and assure that employees, local commissioners, commission staff, the legislature, and other key stakeholders are kept informed and involved during the transition and implementation process.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

The California Children and Families Act of 1998 established a large-scale, comprehensive approach to addressing the health, sustainability, and school readiness of the state's children and families. The Act, as codified in California statute, establishes the powers and duties of the state commission that include, "Providing for independent research, including evaluation of any relevant programs, to identify the best standards and practices for optimal early childhood development, and establishing and monitoring demonstration projects."

1. Project Objectives

The overarching objective of this project was to develop a revised evaluation framework that would fulfill the information and reporting needs of both the state and local commissions and of other First 5 stakeholders. Procedurally, an important objective of the project was to ensure that the group's output was responsive to external feedback, including the specific recommendations of an audit of First 5 conducted by the California Bureau of State Audit in 2004.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation Workgroup

The purpose of the Evaluation Workgroup was to assess the existing evaluation framework, identify impediments to data collection and evaluation, and then collaborate to develop a revision simultaneously able to address state commission assessment needs and support the array of local commission programs and services. Members included state commission staff and local commission executive staff selected by the First 5 Association of California's Executive Committee (Appendix 1 contains a roster of members). The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and Altmayer Consulting, Inc. were retained to assist the workgroup.

3. Workgroup Process and Approach

The group drew on a variety of resources for information throughout the process. An in-depth review of the current framework, interviews with participants and stakeholders, and consultation with local program and evaluation staff, executive directors and other stakeholders at various stages provided valuable insights to the group.

Particularly valuable information and advice came from a panel of performance evaluation researchers the group invited to present their experience in large-scale and diverse efforts such as the First 5 initiative.

Following this research and review, the group developed a conceptual framework. Concepts were then "tested" against critical success factors developed by the group, as discussed below, and a subgroup reviewed the concepts with service providers, local program and evaluation managers and executive directors.

Finally the workgroup specified how each component of the framework would work, identified key implementation issues and developed a preliminary implementation plan.

4. Current State of the Initiative

The proposed framework was presented to local commissions at the State First 5 annual conference, where it was enthusiastically received. Workgroup members have also presented the proposed framework to community stakeholders and other local commissions in their respective regions.

5. Critical Success Factors

The workgroup developed a set of critical success factors that would serve as standards against which it could test elements of the new framework, and established a priority order for these factors. The workgroup ranked the following factors as most important:

1. The framework will measure effectiveness of investments.
2. The framework will allow us to communicate work and accomplishments to multiple constituencies effectively.
3. The data collection will be simplified and the burden of collection for the state framework reduced to meet the needs of stakeholders.
4. The framework will contain sufficient state and local data to drive decisions and program changes and to advocate support for those decisions.
5. Consensus between state and local commissions will exist on data reported to the state and outcome information that will be collected at state level.
6. The State, counties and agencies will share ownership and responsibility for the framework and understand their respective role and what is expected of them.

6. Relationship of Proposed Framework to First 5 Financial Management Project

In 2004, the California First 5 Commission and the First 5 Association of California began working with the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) to develop a financial management and reporting toolkit for County commissions. When complete, the toolkit will include:

- The First 5 Financial Management Guide
- Model policies and procedures
- A training curriculum in financial management
- Peer consultation and support mechanisms
- A plan for ongoing financial management technical assistance.

In implementing the recommended framework, it will be important that "accountability" information, including financial information, is reported consistently across counties. The First 5 Financial Management Guide will facilitate consistent reporting by recommending standard financial reporting formats for all First 5 commissions. The Guide is scheduled to be available to all commissions in July 2005. Appendix 2 summarizes these financial reporting guidelines.

SECTION TWO: EVALUATION ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1. Critical Issues Related to State and Local Evaluation

To prepare for workgroup deliberations, the consulting team conducted interviews and reviewed background documents. Several critical issues were identified and discussed by the workgroup as summarized below.

- **Diverse stakeholder expectations and needs for diverse information.** First 5 is a unique age-specific approach intersecting multiple service platforms. As such, it has created a diverse and invested group of stakeholders ranging from state legislators, to local elected officials, to representatives of community based organizations, activists, and researchers. The breadth of these interests creates diverse demands for evaluating the success of First 5 investments. For example some stakeholders want to know the number of people served and their demographic information. Others seek overall, state-wide results, essentially seeking an answer to the question: "What has changed in the condition of children from birth to age 5 that can be attributed to First 5 investments?" Still others want to know what outputs and outcomes have resulted from the operation of specific programs.

- **Disparate approaches to measurement and evaluation**. Local commissions and the State Commission developed their evaluation approaches in parallel but separately. As a result, the approaches to evaluation vary greatly, both among local commissions and between local commissions and the state. The same holds true for the diverse capacities of counties to conduct evaluations.

- **Lack of definitional clarity**. Many of the terms used in evaluation discussions are subject to various interpretations and meanings. The number and diversity of stakeholders complicates the issue. Consider, for example, the term, "result." For some, the word refers to services provided, while others interpret it to mean the impact on the children and families served. Definitional issues will continue to be a challenge for implementation.

- **Roles and responsibilities**. The lack of clarity, both internally and externally, regarding the role of state and local commissions in evaluation is further complicated by varying interpretations of First 5 legislation. Key questions the workgroup addressed included:

  - What the State's responsibility is for evaluating locally funded programs.

  - What the responsibility is at the local level for evaluating locally-funded programs.

  - How these responsibilities differ and how they may overlap.

- **Volume and consistency in data collection**. Interviews with commission representatives indicated that the sheer volume of required data collection and associated problems with accuracy are issues related to the existing evaluation framework. Typical data entry accuracy problems appear to be compounded by definitional questions. Interviewees noted that the state and local commissions' terminology are not consistent. Finally, a lack of understanding of how data was going to be used or the benefits accruing at either the state or local level has contributed to the lack of support for and participation in data collection efforts.

- **Accurately measuring what First 5 is doing.** It has been noted that First 5 investments often serve a diverse client base ranging from increasing community provider capacity to directly serving children. The evaluation framework should provide means to effectively capture the results of both the commissions' direct service provision and increasing the service capacity of community providers by considering a diverse set of evaluation tools including community based indicators, case studies, in-depth research investigations, and other approaches as appropriate.

- **Complexity.** Complexity is a side effect of the issues cited above. Given that First 5 investments are often interwoven with other community resources, it is difficult to isolate First 5 impact. Complexity also presents challenges to interpreting and evaluating results and effectively communicating those results to the public, the media, and other stakeholder groups.

- **Need to create a learning environment.** Many of the other issues discussed in this section have inhibited the creation of a learning environment in which successes and challenges are built upon to continuously improve processes, products and results. There is a need to build a culture of joint success that recognizes, values and appreciates mutual dependency.

2. External Pressures and Challenges

In addition to systemic challenges associated with evaluation, local and state commissions are operating in an environment of increased legislative and public scrutiny. External pressures and challenges can be attributed to:

- **Urgency to provide information on the return citizens are getting for the First 5 investment.** This issue is a strategic concern at both the state and local levels. First 5 agencies are clearly under intense scrutiny, and commissions and staffs are being pressed to justify the resources that go to the initiative. Several interviewees brought this up but many interviewees also cautioned, citing the speed with which the original framework was developed, that the workgroup needs to move forward quickly, but with due deliberation.

- **Local commissions' strong support for maintaining a high degree of autonomy to focus on local needs.** An important manifestation of this support is the need to clarify early in the process to what extent local efforts will, should, or can be evaluated within a state framework. Also requiring early clarification are the resulting implications for technical considerations, such as data collection, responsiveness to stakeholders and complexity of the system.

The increased public attention is, to some degree, natural as commissions evolve from being startup organizations to more stable and recognizable public agencies. It is also a byproduct of limitations of the current reporting structure's ability to effectively communicate the services provided to children and families and the results being achieved. Concurrent to the workgroup effort, proposals are being considered by the Legislature to modify the original legislative language and clarify reporting and evaluation requirements.

3. Stakeholder Questions

In section 1, "Critical Issues," we identified challenges posed by the diversity of First 5 stakeholders and their varied information requirements. To assist in the construction of a framework responsive to these stakeholders and their concerns, the workgroup focused much effort on these interested entities and the questions they want answered.

Who are the First 5 Stakeholders?

The workgroup identified an extensive list of stakeholders within the following groupings (note, stakeholders presented within each grouping are examples and are not intended to be a complete listing):

- Customers – Direct or indirect recipients of our services (children and families, caregivers, provider groups)

- Vested Partners – Groups and individuals who are very involved, have a direct, vested interest in First 5 (child development advocates, staff, grantees, schools, service providers, association)

- Interested Parties – Groups and individuals who are concerned with First 5 but not directly involved (tobacco buyers, funding sources including foundations, national associations, state departments)

- Direct Watchers – Groups and individuals who exercise direct control or influence on First 5 resources and decisions (Governor, Legislators, State Commission, local Commissions, County Boards of Supervisors)

- Indirect Watchers – Groups and individuals who have indirect control over dollars and who exercise significant influence (other elected officials, media, tobacco industry, voters).

What Questions Do Stakeholders Want Answered?

The workgroup identified fundamental questions common to all stakeholders, as shown below. Beyond these basic questions are many others, resulting from the various perspectives held by stakeholders.

What First 5 stakeholders want to know

- Who and how many are served?
- How much is being spent?
- On what? Who is providing services?
- Is First 5 efficient?
- What results are being achieved?

SECTION THREE: PROPOSED APPROACH

1. Independent Evaluator Input and Recommendations

A critical factor in developing the recommended approach was the input of a panel of nationally recognized experts who provided insights on conducting large-scale evaluation efforts. Four individuals comprised the panel:

- Ross F. Conner, Ph.D., University of California at Irvine
- John Love, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Mathematica Policy Institute, Princeton, NJ
- Ross A. Thompson, Ph.D., University of California at Davis
- Margaret A. O'Brien-Strain - Director, Social Policy, SPHERE Institute, Burlingame, CA

The panel attended the February 8, 2005 meeting of the Evaluation Workgroup. Each panelist made a brief presentation, then all participated in a question-and-answer session. Panelists were asked to address the following topics:

- Perspectives on large-scale evaluation and data-reporting efforts. Risks and benefits associated with large-scale client-based data collection efforts.
- Relative benefits and drawbacks of using population-level data and client-level data to evaluate the success of large-scale efforts and the role, if any that population-level measures have in such efforts.
- Valid indicators of school readiness and what data should be collected to develop such indicators.
- Ways to address the cost-benefit question on a large-scale effort like First 5 and valid methods for identifying return on investment, especially in light of the challenge of addressing issues of contribution versus attribution.

The input summarized below indicates that many of the conditions critical to effective large-scale evaluations are not present within the First 5 environment.

- Large-scale evaluation efforts, which typically have multiple programs and are geographically dispersed work best when certain conditions exist:
  - Programs are specific, well defined and consistently implemented.
  - Measures are well defined and consistently implemented. Also important is to focus closely on indicators, because although they are related to outcomes, they are not perfect reflections of outcomes.
  - Program staff and clients support the program and the goals of the evaluation. Program staff buy-in is critical to the effective collection of evaluation data.

- Evaluation efforts produce useful and optimal outcomes when these conditions are met:
  - Programs are comparable
  - Efforts are longitudinal, that is, the same data are collected at several points over time, outcomes are well defined, and data are uniformly collected across sites.
  - Studies are compared in some way, either varieties of the program or using multiple objectives.

- There are significant barriers to effective large-scale evaluations:

  - Programs with many goals.
  - Programs that are small and serve many clients.
  - Programs that are funded by multiple funding sources.
  - Programs without easily observable outcomes.
  - The impossibility of imposing the "ideal" model of research due to the number of environmental variables and real-world difficulties in data collection and comparison.

- It is extremely challenging to prove attribution versus contribution in social programs because of the many uncontrollable variables. A true cost/benefit study is virtually impossible due to difficulties in collection and comparison.

- It is important to differentiate between evaluation for "learning", i.e., understanding successful strategies, versus evaluation for "accountability", i.e., demonstrate that funded strategies had an impact. This may require separate evaluation approaches. Possible ways to address accountability concerns:

  - Present basic information on resource expenditure, use of services, and/or number of children involved.
  - Highlight model programs and efforts and use individual stories. Collecting stories will lead to information sharing and greater buy-in.
  - Begin with a logical framework and present a theory of change or logic model.

2. Purposes of Evaluation

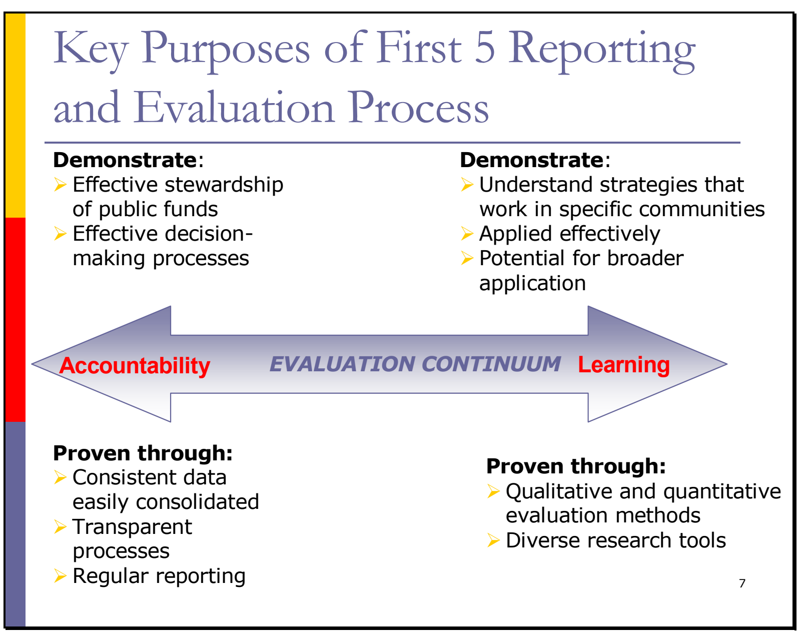
One of the critical lessons learned from the discussion with the national experts was the need to to be clear about the intended purposes of evaluation and then to build the evaluation framework around those purposes. The workgroup recommends that the First 5 Evaluation Framework be built to address two essential purposes:

- Accountability – Provide standard indicators of the extent to which First 5 commissions are effectively meeting their mandate. They can do this by demonstrating that they are:
  - Effective stewards of public funds
  - Utilizing effective and transparent decision-making processes
  - Presenting clear reporting on the services provided in an accessible and understandable format.

- Learning – Improve programs and contribute to the field of early childhood development by providing indicators of the extent to which First 5 Commissions are developing, evaluating and employing strategies to positively enhance the lives of young children and their families. They can do this by demonstrating that they:
  - Identify new strategies that work (emerging practice)
  - Understand in what situations (specific communities) those strategies can and should be employed
  - Apply proven, effective strategies (best practice)

Illustration 3.1 below summarizes the evaluation continuum between accountability and learning and demonstrates that these purposes are not mutually exclusive.

Illustration 3.1



The workgroup recommends that regardless of the level, program or initiative being evaluated, the evaluation approach must be able to consistently and clearly answer the following four questions:

1. What conditions are First 5 Commissions working to address?
2. How are they being addressed?
   - Who and how many are receiving services?
   - What services are being funded?
   - Who is providing those services?
3. What results are they achieving?
4. How can state and local commissions learn from local County experiences, results and share statewide?

Accountability

Learning

Questions 1-3 can be considered accountability questions and questions 3 and four learning questions. Question 3, concerning results achieved, must be addressed both for accountability and learning purposes . In reality these questions are not easily separable; however they provide two dimensions for presenting and understanding the impact of the First 5 initiative.

3. Focus of Evaluation Workgroup Recommendations

The First 5 initiative encompasses four program categories: state programs funded 100 percent by the state; the school readiness initiative, which is jointly funded by the state and county commissions; county commission initiatives, which are funded 100 percent by individual counties; and other jointly funded initiatives. The revised framework focuses on two of these categories: 1) 100% county-funded programs and 2) the jointly funded school readiness initiative.

The workgroup used the two purposes of evaluation described above to develop evaluation components for 100% county-funded programs and to the school readiness initiative to create the statewide evaluation framework. The framework is detailed in the following two sections.

SECTION FOUR: LOCAL COMMISSION PROJECT EVALUATION

This section outlines the proposed framework for locally funded projects, (i.e. programs and projects funded by each County's allocated share of First 5 revenue or from other locally generated revenue). There are three proposed components to the framework for local commission funded programs:

1. County Commission Responsibility for Local Evaluation

Local commissions are recommended to be the primary point of evaluation for locally funded projects. While many local commissions have already developed an extensive approach to local evaluation, this recommendation would make local commissions responsible for conducting their own evaluation efforts. (However, the state, through the Center for Results component, would also be involved in evaluating some local programs, using approaches such as sampling, targeted research and meta-analysis. Unlike local commissions' evaluation efforts, the state role would be to look at overall impacts.)

This recommendation also clarifies ambiguity in the current legislation that requires the State Commission to:

> …define the results to be achieved by adopted guidelines and collecting and analyzing data to measure progress toward attaining these results. (Health and Safety Code Section 130125 c.)
>
> as well as requires each county commission to:
>
> …conduct an audit of and issue a written report on the implementation and performance of, its functions during the preceding fiscal year, including at a minimum, the manner in which funds were expended, the program toward and the achievement of program goals and objectives and the measurement of specific outcomes through appropriate and reliable indicators. (Health and Safety Code Section 130150 c.)

Many of the critical issues identified earlier, such as duplicative effort and confusion over roles and responsibilities, arose as state and local commissions sought to implement each respective provision of the First 5 legislation, etc.

The workgroup recommends that local commissions serve as the primary evaluators of locally funded programs, based upon the following conclusions:

- ❑ Local commissions are directly linked to the funding decisions and are most apt to build an evaluation system that will support funding allocations and decision-making, an important purpose of evaluation.
- ❑ Local commissions are closer to the programs funded so they can evaluate both reported results and methods of service delivery.
- ❑ Evaluation must be based on program design. Local commissions are better positioned to develop tailored evaluations appropriate to program design. Local commissions are increasingly interweaving First 5 funding into existing community resources, such as providing health services within existing pre-school programs. In addition, local commissions are leveraging First 5 funding to expand the full complement of available services for families. These approaches make program and evaluation design additionally complex. Evaluating these types of efforts requires developing and monitoring a unique set of indicators and a complex evaluation.
- ❑ Statewide evaluation by definition requires reliance on some standard set of indicators. Applying a standard set of indicators results in some programs collecting data on measures not relevant to the program's intent and is likely to impact the validity of results because data may not consistently collected.

In sum, the lessons learned over the past five years and the input of national experts led the workgroup to the conclusion that local program evaluation is the appropriate responsibility of local commissions for both practical and decision-making purposes. While many local commissions are well positioned to execute this responsibility and have already developed extensive local evaluation plans and programs, the workgroup recognized that other commissions would require further technical assistance and support.

As part of this proposed framework, local commissions will be required to submit evaluation studies to the state in order to support statewide evaluation efforts and are expected to be responsive to any inquiries from the State regarding evaluation efforts and/or program results. It is also assumed that the State will develop a format for the inclusion of local evaluation results in the annual report.

Sharing local evaluation results would facilitate a statewide learning process and identify successful models that merit further investment by either the State Commission or local commissions. The workgroup recommends that the State adopt criteria to guide local commissions to determine which evaluation reports merit statewide distribution. Criteria may include:

- Evaluation reports that address the results of multiple programs within a specific initiative or platform of services
- Programs that contain innovative strategies or specific results with high potential for statewide learning, due to the subject matter or findings
- Reports that identify interventions that may be very effective or ineffective in working with specific populations.

2. Standard and Consistent Reporting for Accountability

While the workgroup recommends that local commissions be responsible for evaluation of local programs to meet the needs of the diverse stakeholders, the workgroup also recommends use of a single standard and consistent reporting format by commissions to provide a consistent statewide picture of:

- ❑ What services are being funded
- ❑ Who and how many are receiving services?
- ❑ Who is providing these services?

The workgroup has developed a sample data reporting worksheet to demonstrate the type of information that would be submitted by each commission on programs and services funded by fiscal year (see Appendix 4). The proposed process for reporting would serve as the basis for the local commission profile portion of the state annual report and replace existing annual report requirements.

As part of the framework, each local commission would need to map funded services and programs to the standard reporting format. The expectation is that the majority of this effort will be be done by local commissions, not by providers, many of whom are already required to provide data regarding service recipients in support of existing local evaluation efforts. However, mapping by the local commissions should not be done in isolation. This is particularly important in the context of transferring data electronically. The state evaluator will need to work with county commissions in the mapping process. Each of the elements is described below.

- ❑ ***What services are being funded?***

Each local commission will map the programs and services funded to one of the four Desired Results: Improved Family Functioning, Improved Child Development, Improved Health or Improved Systems of Care. Within each of these result areas, service categories will also be identified (see Illustration 4.2 below). Each commission must identify the services it supported each year by the result area/service category and provide the total amount funded.

Illustration4. 2: Proposed Reporting Structure

Result Area 1: Improved Family Functioning (Family Support, Education and Services)
Services: Community Resource and Referral
Parent Education Programs
Distribution of Kit for New Parents
Behavioral and Mental Health Assessment or Services
Provision of Basic Family Needs (Food, Clothes, Housing)
Other Family Support Services

Result Area 2: Improved Child Development (Child Development Services)
Early Education Programs for Children
Developmental Screening and Assessments
Family Literacy Programs
Early Education Provider Programs (including CARES)
Early Education Subsidies or Vouchers
Kindergarten Transition Services
Other Child Development Programs

Result Area 3: Improved Health (Health Education and Services)
Health Insurance Enrollment and Assistance
Tobacco Cessation Education and Treatment
Nutrition Education and Assessments
Safety Education and Injury/Violence Prevention
Primary Care Services (Immunizations, Well Child Checkups)
Acute or Specialty Care Services
Oral Health
Breast Feeding Assistance

Result Area 4: Improved Systems of Care
Service Planning and Coordination
Evaluation
Technical Assistance to Agencies
Capacity Building
Systems Change Planning and Coordination

Proposed service categories were based on a review of most recent State Annual Report. As part of implementation each result area and service category will need to be clearly defined and examples provided.

- ❑ ***Who is receiving these services?***

Each County Commission will be responsible for providing a summary of the total number of children, parents/caregivers, and providers served for each result area/service category in which it expended funds in the fiscal year. Expended funds would include all funds expended or accrued by the agency during the fiscal year consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices.

Information regarding children served will be reported by age, ethnic background and language spoken in the home.

- ***Who is providing these services?***

Similar to reporting of children served, commissions would be required to provide a summary of who provided the services for each result area/service category in which funds were expended in the reporting fiscal year. County commissions would report total dollars expended, according to categories decided on in conjunction with the State's evaluation contractor. Although final decisions on categories will be made during implementation, the workgroup recommends that dollars be reported by result area, service category and type of agency contracted to provide the services. The proposed service provider categories are:

- Elementary Schools/Elementary School Districts
- Community Based Agencies
- County Government Agency
- Other Government Agency
- Private Agencies/Institutions
- First 5 Commission

As part of the proposed framework, local commissions will report based on which providers were contracted to provide the identified service. For example, if a Commission contracts with multiple agencies under a collaborative agreement then the funding would be distributed by the various types of contracted entities. However, if a commission contracts with a primary agency, such as school district, and cannot report the subcontracts with other agencies to provide support services, then the total value of the contract would be reported under the school district category.

The workgroup identified several implementation issues specific to the standard reporting structure:

- Technology - The state would provide a user-friendly technology solution for local commissions to enter and report all required service category program information.
- Definitions - Each of the components of the reporting structure would be clearly defined. Examples would be provided to guide local Commissions regarding what services belong in each reporting category.
- Training - Local commissions would receivetraining to understand how to collect, sort and report the standard information.
- Duplicated/Unduplicated Counts - The proposed approach recognizes that the data may not be unduplicated counts of children and families served at a County level. Each program, however, should provide, where feasible, unduplicated counts of children served. To the degree possible, commissions should also provide unduplicated counts.

3. Statewide Review of Results and Summary Reporting of Trends, Policy Issues and Research Questions Utilizing an Evaluation Team

The final component of the proposed approach is a "Center for Results" at the state level. The primary purpose of the center would be to conduct statewide research and evaluation on the results, broadly defined, of the First 5 initiative statewide. It would review and analyze local evaluation reports, annual report data, and other data sources to present policy recommendations for broad consideration. The team would also propose to the State Commission and then carry out a statewide research and evaluation agenda. The Evaluation Workgroup recommends that the center's staff and a steering committee made up of state and local representatives be established by the State Commission. The Center, while created and overseen by the State Commission, would work in partnership with local commissions to identify and communicate results. See Section Six of this report for a complete discussion of the roles and functions of the Center for Results.

SECTION FIVE: SCHOOL READINESS PROJECT EVALUATION

This section describes the approach proposed for all State-funded school readiness programs, and includes all services funded by State and local funds. The school readiness portion of the recommended evaluation framework is based on the concept of the accountability to learning continuum. Modifications to elements of the current framework address issues identified in the interview and data collection process, advice from experts, and the experience of committee members themselves. These issues include:

- The collection and reporting of individual participant data has been a serious concern due to the significant resource commitment required, the resulting cost of collecting and compiling the data, concerns about consistency and reliability, and, finally, some participants' unwillingness to provide information.
- The difficulty of using a standard set of data to capture the richness and diversity of program activities and results and the resulting inability to share such results throughout the state, both for accountability and learning purposes.
- Currently local evaluation efforts are not formally linked to the State Commission's evaluation process, resulting in missed opportunities to apply lessons learned from other communities.

The recommended framework addresses these issues by using multiple reporting and evaluation approaches to help stakeholders understand the services provided and the results achieved. The workgroup recommends that reporting be tailored to individual program designs so that a more complete statewide picture of School Readiness results can be provided to stakeholders. Further, the workgroup recommends that reporting be done in the aggregate rather than at the individual participant level. As an alternative to the current "all children-all programs" approach, the State Commission would conduct research based on sampling, in-depth research and evaluation projects at selected funded sites. Local commissions will be required to collect and report certain client and program aggregate data as discussed below. Individual client data would still be collected for focused research projects in which the state and an individual county or counties agree to and cooperate on project design and associated evaluation for which individual client data would be necessary.

1. Standard and Consistent Reporting for Accountability

The first component for school readiness project evaluation follows the previously described approach to accountability reporting for county-funded programs, with the exception that rather than reporting by county, school readiness data elements would be reported by "funded application."

In the framework proposed here, each funded application will report basic demographic and spending information to the State Commission for use in the annual report, providing stakeholders with consistent information for each funded application across the state to answer the key questions that the workgroup believes all stakeholders want to know, as described in Section Three. Briefly, all funded applications will provide the following information:

- What services are being funded?
- Who and how many are receiving services (in the aggregate)?
- Who is providing these services?

Locally funded applications will be responsible for collecting, maintaining and reporting this data to the State Commission. State Commission staff will summarize the information for its annual report on School Readiness investments across the state, by services provided, by provider, and by recipient of services. The State Commission will also use the data reported as inputs to inform further research, identify trends, and integrate with outcome information to provide a comprehensive picture of School Readiness investments and results as described below.

2. Reporting Results from a Menu of Outcomes and Indicators

The second component provides a way for locally funded applications to report on results from a menu of outcomes and indicators (see Appendix 5 for a draft menu). Local commissions will select the outcomes and indicators identified in the application that best reflect their goals, outcomes, and program investments. As part of the application process individual commissions and the State will agree to the specific outcomes and indicators selected and under which the local commission will gather data. The outcomes and indicators approved in every application will be a limited set, but will reflect major aspects of a local commission's program investments.

Within the menu, outcomes and indicators are presented in the following categories:

- Improved child health
- Improved family functioning
- Improved early care and education
- Increased schools' readiness for children

The outcomes and indicators are based on the Five Essential Elements, National School Readiness Indicators, and the First 5 Data Dictionary. The workgroup expects that the selected evaluation contractor will validate, refine, and finalize the proposed list of measures.

When developing this menu, the evaluation workgroup established 12 criteria for selecting outcomes and indicators. Outcomes and indicators must:

1. Have communication power and be compelling
2. Pass the "public square" test, have a clear and understandable link to the services provided
3. Include as many measures as necessary but as few as possible – "the right number" to provide sufficient information for accountability and learning
4. Be time sensitive
5. Be clearly defined
6. Have built-in quality
7. Provide a logical link between process and outcome measures
8. Be based on nationally recognized standards or otherwise validated.
9. Be culturally and linguistically acceptable
10. Be relevant – able to be effected by the School Readiness program
11. Serve as leading indicators or proxies for indicators that are too costly or otherwise not possible to use
12. Apply to both small and large counties

Although the workgroup has developed a recommended menu, members agree that consistent and full implementation of this component is crucial to its success. The group identified data definitions, indicator definitions and methods for reporting as important implementation issues related to this component and expect that the selected contractor would address them.

In addition to reporting outcomes and indicators based on the menu, local commissions may provide evaluation reports and/or other locally generated outcomes information to the State to provide as complete a picture as possible of local school readiness initiatives.

3. State Directed Data Collection, Research and Evaluation

The third component of the school readiness portion of the framework replaces the current requirement that local school readiness-funded applications collect individual participant-level data with a state directed and operated program of in-depth data collection and analysis of selected programs and strategies through the Center for Results previously mentioned. The workgroup, when developing this component, sought to ensure that the benefits of the client-level data collection effort would be retained, while avoiding the associated concerns about cost and data consistency and reliability. The proposed approach will enable state evaluators to conduct focused research and report on results using a variety of methods, such as:

Studies to identify broad trends. This component could include the evaluation of child school readiness outcomes using the Kindergarten Entry Profile or a similar evaluation tool. Researchers could design studies using a community sample or client samples in areas known to be intensively served. Other data collection methods could include parent reporting, school reporting, or other methods that can provide reliable and consistent data.

Intensive data collection efforts. Sample data could be taken from the universe of school readiness participants and/or sites. Collection and reporting could come from a representative sample geographically, demographically, or by selected strategy approach.

Applied research, case studies. This method would allow in-depth research on specific interventions and specific program designs as they are implemented. This method would allow state researchers to collect qualitative as well as quantitative information. One very promising area of research for learning that the workgroup believes identified is studies that compare results of similar interventions across the state.

The purpose and activities of the Center for Results are described in detail in Section Six of this report.

SECTION SIX: CENTER FOR RESULTS

A critical element of the proposed framework is the dedication of resources for the development and implementation of a research and evaluation agenda at the state level. The workgroup recommends that the existing State research and evaluation team evolve into a more formalized structure for the managing, analyzing an communicating of results and outcomes from the First 5 investments statewide. The term "Center for Results" refers both to the resources that will be dedicated to carry out the State's research and evaluation agenda as well as the policy- and decision-making structure needed to guide this effort.

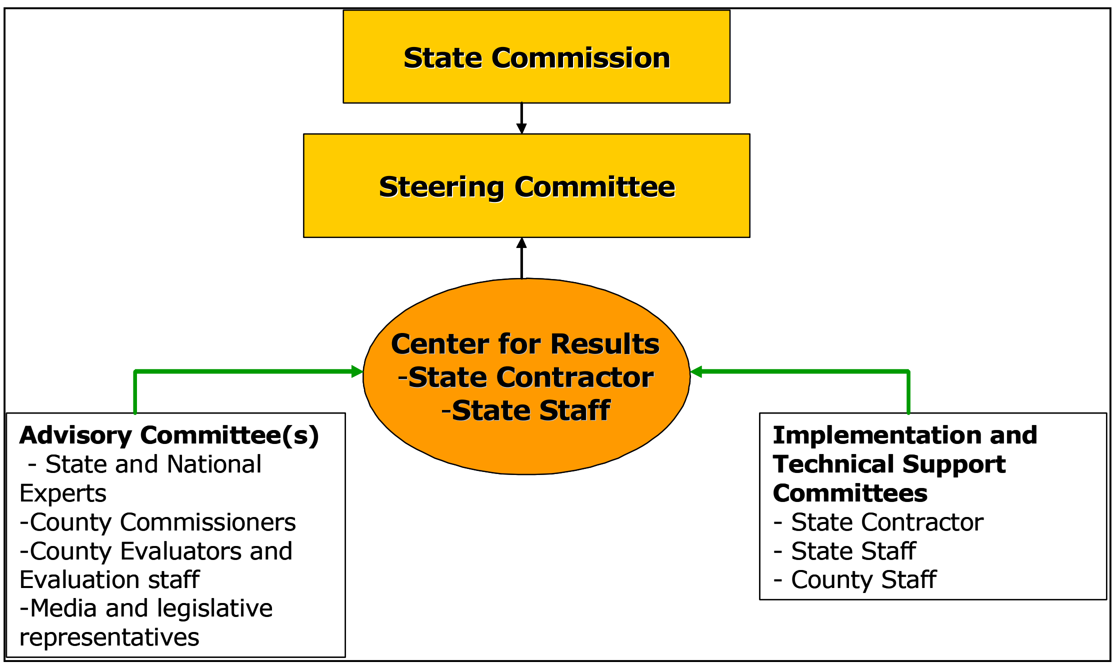
1. Proposed Structure

The workgroup recommends that the State Commission create a Steering Committee that would direct and oversee the implementation of a strategic research and evaluation plan under the Commission's direction. Membership of this Committee could include one or more State Commissioners, local representatives and experts in the area of child development and health from outside the First 5 governance structure. It is anticipated that a contractor would be engaged to lead the implementation of the research and evaluation agenda, working cooperatively with State staff and incorporating input from county evaluators and other local staff. The State contractor and staff would be supported by advisory committees and/or panels that would provide input in the development of the research and evaluation agenda. This agenda would establish priorities and provide a vehicle for making research and evaluation investments.

The Center for Results will provide valuable accountability-based information regarding 100% locally-funded programs and school readiness programs and services. Its work is also envisioned to be the cornerstone of the "learning" aspect of the evaluation process. As such, it is a substantial improvement over the current evaluation process, because this framework proposes that gathered information be provided to local commissions to enhance their efforts to improve school readiness programs while highlighting promising areas for additional research.

The graphic below presents a proposed organizational structure for the Center for Results. As shown in the graphic, the proposed framework envisions a strong partnership between the state and county commissions to develop and implement the research and evaluation agenda. County Commission input on policy issues would come through representation on advisory committees and through an implementation and technical committee that will address protocols and practices for research and evaluation efforts.

Proposed Center for Results Organization



2. Functions and Duties

Working with advisory and technical committees, it is anticipated that the Center will perform several functions related to the development, management and implementation of a research and evaluation agenda, including the following roles and responsibilities::

- **Create a Central Repository of First 5 Evaluation Information** - This repository would include the local evaluation reports as well as state evaluation reports and other state and national reports on the promising and best practices for early childhood interventions. The repository will be an information library to maintain and disseminate information on effective early childhood interventions to minimize learning curves and take advantage of the tremendous and diverse investments in California in early childhood development.

- **Develop and Guide Implementation of a Strategic Research and Evaluation Plan** – The selected contractor and State staff, working under a Steering Committee and with input from Advisory Committee(s), would develop a strategic plan that would guide the research and evaluation investments. The plan would consider several inputs as shown in the graphic below, including trends in First 5 investments, national and state research findings, results reported from local commissions, demographic data, and other information. Once developed, it would be the responsibility of the State contractor and State staff to execute this plan. Upon review of the information gathered, the team will make recommendations for more in-depth evaluation efforts such as reviewing similar programs in multiple counties or case studies of specific programs with promising practices. This builds and expands on the current practice of the State Research Committee developing a long term research and evaluation plan. The discussion below provides examples of how these research initiatives could be carried out.

- **Review Local Results and Develop Policy Recommendations** – With a broad perspective on evaluation, the team is recommended to review local evaluation reports with several questions in mind:
  - How does this effort compare with other investments statewide?
  - What do these results show that is significant overall or for a specific population?
  - Is this program/service a candidate for replication either through state or other local funding?

  The Center for Results would provide feedback to County Commissions on the results and also identify candidates for in-depth, case study or further evaluation and research.

- **Compare First 5 Results with National and Other Research Efforts** – In recent years, there have been an increasing number of studies which demonstrate the positive impact of the early intervention in children. Because of California's unique demographic population, these interventions may or may not have comparable results when implemented here. Part of the research agenda will be to evaluate the impact of national practices, such as home visitation, when implemented in California.

- **Conduct In-depth/Case Study Research** – The Center for Results, working through the State contractor and staff, will conduct in-depth research and evaluation studies. Dedicated professional researchers and evaluators will have the capacity to conduct credible, informative evaluations that can support First 5 decision-making. Examples of these studies may include:
  - Comparative analyses of counties investing in similar program initiatives
  - Cost-benefit and return on investment evaluations to quantify the value associated with specific programs and initiatives
  - Evaluations to isolate critical elements of programs which have the greatest impact on clients served.

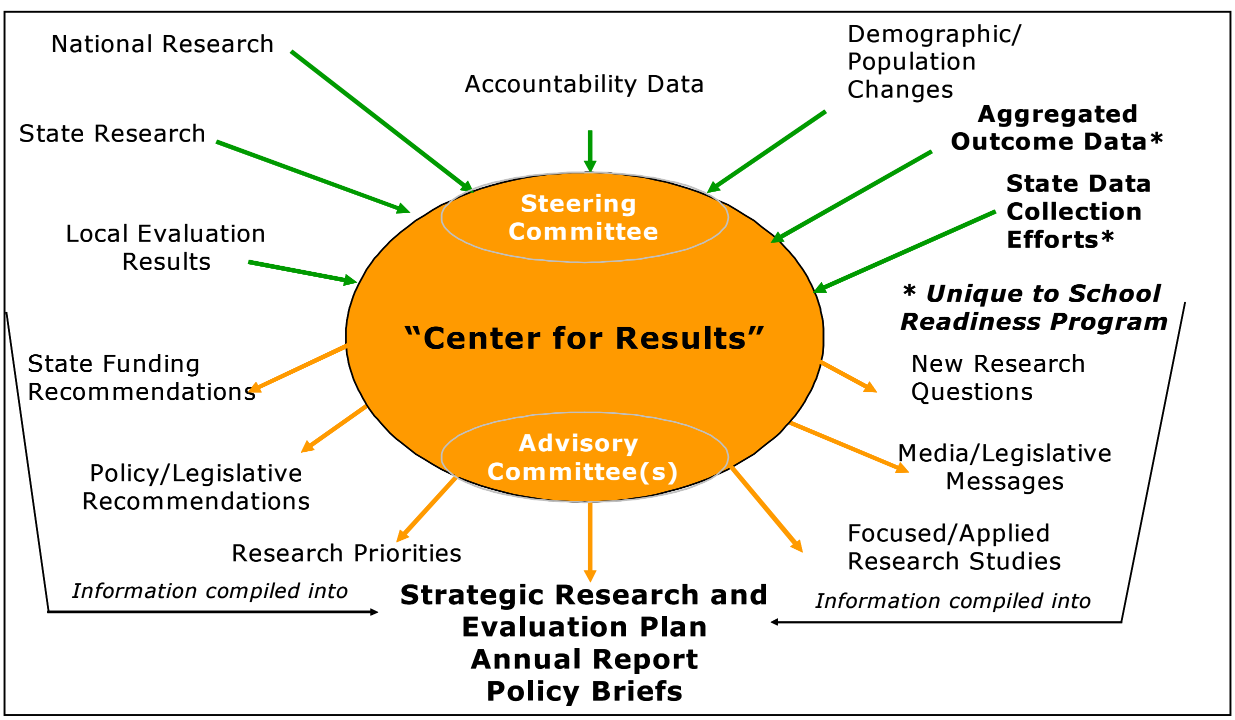
This would build on the current state practice of conducting case studies and highlighting local evaluation programs of merit and particular impact. Examples of these types of studies are presented in section three below.

- **Communicate Research Findings to Policymakers, Practitioners and Other Stakeholders** – The proposed Center will employ a variety of tools to inform policymakers, practitioners and other First 5 stakeholders of the results of its research and evaluation efforts. The Center will provide non-technical publications including newsletters, policy briefs, formal briefings, and presentations and will prepare and distribute the First 5 Annual Report. The Center will also hold educational forums and provide technical assistance to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated into future First 5 programs and investments.

The Center will play a critical role in establishing the link between evaluation and practice. One of its ongoing responsibilities should be to ensure that First 5 decision makers use evaluation results. The Center's staff will have the critical role of analyzing, interpreting and communicating local results and placing those results in the context of statewide issues facing young children and families in California.

The graphic below illustrates how the Center for Results would consider multiple inputs in developing policy, legislative and programmatic recommendations.

Center for Results Proposed Inputs and Deliverables



3. Examples of Research and Evaluation Initiatives

In developing the concept for a Center for Results, the Workgroup discussed ways in which such a directed research effort could be provide valuable insights. The following examples illustrate the approaches that could be used by the Center.

a. Comparing Investments in Specific Initiatives and Programs Across the State

The first example involves comparing common investments or strategies across the State. Local commissions around the State are investing in similar strategies, but applying these strategies through diverse programs. The proposed approach would expand on current evaluation efforts by providing a more focused concentration on reviewing local results to create a First 5 "learning community."

Home Visitation for Newborns, for example, is an emerging practice within First 5, used as means both for outreach to new families and potentially for screening and supporting families at risk for a range of conditions. The Center for Results would be able to conduct in-depth evaluations comparing the results achieved in multiple counties investing in home visitation programs with the purpose of answering the following questions:

- What are the impacts on families involved in the home visitation for newborns?
- What is the comparative impact based on the structure, dosage of the home visitation, duration?
- What are effective screening tools?
- What are the qualifications and experience of those conducting home visitations?

This research effort could provide useful information to counties conducting home visitation programs as well as those considering such strategies. It would also provide information on Statewide results from such investments.

b. Overall Impact of First 5

One of the greatest challenges that needs to be addressed by the evaluation framework is how to articulate the overall impact of First 5 in a meaningful way. The difficulty stems from the diversity of programs, goals, and services provided. Additionally, many of the services funded under First 5 are neither intensive nor long term, but instead link to other services in the community in order to expand or complement existing services. Isolating the "First 5" impact is challenging for many of the reasons identified in sections one and two of this report.

The Center for Results can be an effective resource in defining the impact of First 5 in two ways:

1. Demonstrating Community Capacity Building

The Children and Families Act requires that County Commissions work towards integrating services within communities. Specifically, the Act says that

> ".. No County Strategic Plan shall be deemed adequate or complete until and

unless the plan describes how programs, services and projects relating to early childhood development within the county will be integrated into a consumer-oriented and easily accessible system…."

One aspect of the Center's research could be to determine how the capacity to provide early childhood services has increased in specific communities and/or the in the state as a whole. Such an effort would involve looking at investments from a system-wide perspective to examine whether and to what extent schools, health care providers and families within specific geographic communities and/or statewide have increased their capacity to address the needs of children.

c. Intensive/Longitudinal Studies

As indicated above, not all children and families receiving services under First 5 receive intensive services for a prolonged period of time, which is necessary for tracking impact of services and monitoring results over time. However, some segments of the population, most likely those served for two or more years under school readiness programs, are likely to receive intensive services over a sufficient period of time to enable such studies to be conducted. The Center for Results can direct longitudinal studies of children in such programs, employing sampling methods to determine a subset of the population served which would be candidates for participation. The Center for Results, in partnership with local communities would be able to conduct multi-year investigations that could provide the basis for evaluating the impact and cost-savings associated with First 5 investments over time. Given the complexity of such a study, stemming from diverse programs, locations, and client conditions, it should be conducted by experienced professional researchers who can ensure credibility and reliability of study results.

SECTION SEVEN: IMPLEMENTATION

This section presents an overview of the steps in implementation and discusses critical implementation issues identified by the workgroup.

1. Continuing the State-Local Partnership: Establishing a Joint Implementation Steering Team

Implementing the recommended framework will require a substantial commitment of time and energy at both the local and State commission levels. Through the process of developing the recommended state evaluation framework, workgroup members have created a group culture of mutual respect and increased understanding of the differing roles and requirements of state commission and local commission officials and staffs. The workgroup believes that the good working relationship established between state and local representatives makes it desirable to continue the group as an implementation steering team, and therefore recommends that the State Commission authorize it to continue through the implementation phase.

The purpose of the steering team would be to plan and direct the implementation of the framework, and to establish transition procedures during FY 05-06 to assure that the framework is successfully implemented with FY 06-07, beginning July 1, 2006. (Although the framework will be implemented in FY 06-07, some elements may need to be completed in FY 07-08.

Responsibilities of the Implementation Steering Team would be to:

- Develop a detailed implementation plan and timeline.
- Monitor the transition to assure that implementation elements are developed according to the timeline and advocate for appropriate resources to assure timely implementation.
- Assure sufficient communication and stakeholder input into the process.
- Participate in the development of an RFP for a State Evaluator, review proposals, and recommend a finalist (or finalists) for approval by the State Commission.
- Maintain and foster the excellent state-local partnership that was created in the evaluation workgroup so that implementation issues can be thoroughly evaluated and cooperatively addressed.

2. Key implementation issues

In its deliberations the workgroup identified key implementation issues in three areas: organization and people, process and technology. Continued partnership throughout the process, including the ongoing involvement of the workgroup will be essential for the effective implementation of the proposed approach. Major issues in each category are listed below:

- **Organization and People**

  - *Training*. Appropriate training will be important to assure both successful implementation and to incorporate continuous learning and improvement into the First 5 initiative. The workgroup noted that training will be required at all levels – State, local commissions and staff, as well as providers, and that training will need to be ongoing. Training will be particularly important to assure that all counties can effectively meet the reporting and evaluation expectations outlined in this report. Training should address both reporting expectations as well as technical information on how to complete and submit data worksheets.
  - *New roles and responsibilities at the local level.* Local commissions will be faced with new responsibilities and reporting requirements. Although some commissions currently conduct evaluation studies, all commissions will now need to provide for evaluation studies. The implementation group will need to consider what resource needs the counties will have and how these resources will be provided.
  - *New roles and responsibilities at state commission.* The revised framework will require changes to operating procedures and policies for state staff. For example, detailed requirements and responsibilities must be developed for the research and evaluation team and associated advisory group created as part of the framework.
  - *Consistency.* Program, fiscal and evaluation staffs from all counties as well as state staff will need to work together to assure consistency of implementation.
  - *Communication.* Communicating the changes to the framework will be just part of the challenge. To get understanding and buy-in, the reasons for the changes, the benefits, and a picture of how the system will work once the recommended

framework is in place must be communicated to staff, oversight agencies, providers, participants, other direct stakeholders and the public.

- **Processes**

  - *Selecting a state evaluator.* The current state evaluator's contract has been extended in order to provide sufficient time to revise the framework. A critical task will be to draft an RFP for a new evaluator contract so that the evaluator can be on board in sufficient time to assist with implementation.
  - *Providing resources for transition and implementation.* Resources will be required for both at the state and county levels. The existing network of school readiness coordinators is a good example of the kind of resource commitment that will be necessary. Counties will need assurance that resources will be available for collecting and reporting data to the state.
  - *Establishing a common language.* The diversity of reporting and evaluating methods and the need to communicate effectively to varying audiences creates a need for commonly understood terms.
  - *Refining the details of each evaluation framework component.* Not only is the diversity of reporting and evaluation methods a challenge for communicating clearly but also poses challenges to developing clear and user-friendly reporting formats, processes, and forms.
  - *The transition year.* Numerous questions have been raised about what county commissions should be doing during the transition year, for example, what requirements to include in newly-signed multi-year contracts and what lead time will be necessary for procedural and reporting changes. Although implementation is proposed to take effect July 1, 2006, the implementation plan needs to be as clear as possible on interim tasks and deadlines during the transition year.

- **Technology**

  - *Leveraging current investments.* A major concern of local commissions is that the systems they have already put into place be usable under the new evaluation framework. Commissions that have invested significantly in automated systems need to know how they can leverage their current investments to meet new reporting and data collection requirements. It will be important during implementation planning to decide on how information will be transmitted and shared electronically and at what cost.

    Capability of PEDS to serve local needs. Further, the current state system PEDS, will need to be assessed for the extent to which it can meet data collection and reporting needs under the revised framework. Smaller counties that have used PEDS in the past will need to know how they will be able to most cost effectively collect, store and transmit data to meet new reporting requirements and also to fulfill the requirement to conduct evaluation studies and what resources will be available to them.

Resource availability for technology assessment. Addressing technology needs is crucial to the success of the revised framework. The transition and implementation planning group will need sufficient resources allocated to it to develop solutions.

4. **Need for Ongoing Review and Updating of the Framework**

The changing environment within which the First 5 initiative is carried out will require that the framework be reviewed and updated regularly. While the framework needs maintain standard reporting formats so that participants are not subject to frequent changes in requirements, the way the framework is being used and the requirements imposed on participants to implement the framework need to be assessed periodically for validity, cost effectiveness and relevancy.

Appendix 1: Workgroup Members

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Appendix 2: Summary of Applicable Financial Reporting Procedures

The First 5 Financial Management Guide contains recommended procedures for both external and internal reporting. External reporting means reports intended to be read and used by those outside (for example, the organization annual "audit" or Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). Internal reporting is intended to be used internally to provide management and Commission oversight information during the fiscal year.

The Guide recommends that all commissions provide external reports in compliance with GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) for governments. For external reporting, best practice that governments provide results in a CAFR, which is a GAAP-based document. (County-affiliated commissions year-end information should be incorporated into the County government's CAFR.)

The Guide also recommends that local commissions issue "popular" annual reports that combine organization-level GAAP-based financial information with other relevant information, including program and strategic performance data. The document should be presented in a format designed for the general reader.

One important change to standard commission reporting is reporting fund balance information. Currently, many commissions report fund balance on a non-GAAP basis. Funds are classified as "committed" or "uncommitted." The Guide recommends that, per GAAP standards, fund balance be reported as reserved or unreserved, and within each category, further subdivided. GAAP-basis fund balance reporting will still allow commissions to show the amount of funds uncommitted as unreserved undesignated. Criteria for designating reserved and unreserved fund balance are detailed in the Guide.

Because internal reporting is designed to assist management to effectively monitor and manage resources and to assist commissions in their oversight responsibilities, compliance with GAAP standards is not required. Format and content should be based on the needs of management and commissions. However, the Guide recommends that all commissions prepare internal reports on a regular basis. The Guide recommends that each commission prepare a regular operating statement that reports on revenue and expenditures in the previous period (e.g., monthly or quarterly).

In addition, the Guide recommends that each commission report program and performance information regularly along with financial information. Statistical information on programs and services provided by each local commission should be prepared consistent with management's need for information but in the interests of efficiency should also be presented in a format that will meet the state commission's annual reporting requirements and those of the revised evaluation framework.

Appendix 3: Questions Asked by Stakeholder Groups

Questions Asked by Stakeholder Groups	Stakeholder Groups				
	Customers	Vested Partners	Interested Parties	Indirect Watchers	Direct Watchers
1. Spending and Funding					
How much was spent?		*	*	*	*
How can my agency access funding?		*			
Will my agency's funding be sustained?		*			
How are funding priorities set?				*	
Can Prop 10 help out state government's needs?					*
Who controls the money?				*	
How much are you not spending?		*	*	*	*
What has Prop 10 done to leverage dollars?				*	
How much money goes to direct services?		*	*	*	*
How much goes to administrative costs?		*	*	*	*
How much goes to local commissions as administrators?		*			
2. Where the Money Went			*		
Target groups (ethnicity, special needs, language groups)	*	*	*		*
Geographic areas - regions		*	*		*
Age groups		*	*		*
Providing entities		*	*		*
Results, initiative, strategies		*	*	*	*
Number of children served by category		*	*	*	*
Programs by type		*	*		*
Units of service					*
Local agencies		*			
Prop 10's % of total investment in					
results area?				*	*
programmatic area?				*	
initiative area?				*	
What spending efforts are common statewide?					*
Where do we have critical mass addressing common needs?					*
3. Efficiency					
Were you efficient?		*	*	*	*
How much money has Prop 10 saved?					*
Were programs cost/beneficial?				*	*
Were initiatives cost/beneficial?				*	*
Is Prop 10 as a whole cost/beneficial?				*	*
4. Effectiveness -- What is Working?					
Were you effective?	*	*	*	*	*
What is working well with Prop 10?			*	*	
What has been the difference in the community?		*	*		
How do results affect my institution?		*			
How do results affect my organization's mission?		*			
Have there been unintended consequences?		*			
What were my program's outcomes?		*			
How does my agency's performance compare to others?		*			
Are children better off?				*	
What is working long term?				*	
What is working short term?				*	
What isn't working and why was it funded?				*	
How do you know Prop 10 made a difference?				*	
What do you have to show for the money?					*
What would be the impact of not funding?					*
Is there an outside assessment of Prop 10 performance?					*
5. Financial Condition of First 5 Commissions					
What is the financial conditionn of 1st 5 commissions?					
What are the fund balances of 1st 5 commissions?					
What are the long term financial plans of 1st 5 commissions?					
6. Best Practices					
How can other agencies learn from First 5 best practices?		*			
How can we systematize best practice?		*			
7. System Integration					
How can we partner to better serve needs?		*			
Are you adding value through system integration?			*		
How does first 5 add value to my agency?		*			
How does first 5 add value to my program?		*			
In what areas do we have common priorities?		*			
Can strategies be institutionalized?			*		
8. Goals and Priorities					
What is the level of need to be met?		*			
What are the overarching outcomes?			*		
How are priorities set?				*	
Is the focus on children 0-5 a good strategy?				*	

Appendix 4: Sample Data Reporting Worksheet

First 5 California
County Commission Reporting (100% County Funded)
Accountability Reporting: Reporting Information

Each County would be responsible for completing one Reporting Form for each service/Result Area combination. The sum total of all reporting forms should equal the amount of County allocated funds.

Result Area:
Service Area:

Counties are providing information on each result area/service category combination in which they had funded programs during the reporting period.

Select all the significant modalities that apply:

Home Based Services
Office Based Services
Mobile Service
Classes/Workshops
Public/Community Event

Counties would check off modalities that apply to Result/Service Area. Dollars are not broken out by modality.

Reporting Requirements

Dollars Spent or Encumbered in Last Fiscal Year $XXXXX

Breakdown of Funding by Primary Contractor (Total Should Add to Line Above)

Schools	$XXXXX
Community Based Agencies	$XXXXX
County Govt Agency	$XXXXX
Other Govt Agency	$XXXXX
Private agencies/institutions	$XXXXX
First 5 Commission	$XXXXX

The ethnic and age breakout should be consistent, to the degree possible, with current reporting requirements to minimize impact of the change.

Population Served		
	Children Less than 3	
	Children 3 to Five Years	
	Children (Ages Unknown)	
	Parents/Guardians	
	Providers	

Ethnic Breakdown of Population Served		Children	Parents/ Guardians	Other Family Members
	Alaska/American Indian			
	Asian			
	Black/African-American			
	Hispanic/Latino			
	Pacific Islander			
	White			
	Multiracial			
	Other/Unknown			

Primary Language (Spoken in the Home)		Children	Parents/ Guardians	Other Family Members
	English			
	Spanish			
	Other			
	Unknown			

Appendix 5: Draft School Readiness Menu of Outcomes and Indicators

1. Improved Child Health	
Outcome	**Indicator**
More children have health insurance	children 0-5 with health insurance
More children receive regular well-child visits according to the schedule recommended by the AAP	children 0-5 who received a well child check-up in the past year children 19-35 months who are fully immunized
More children receive dental services in the last year, (including screening and treatments)	children 0-5 who received dental services in the past year
More children 0-5 received a comprehensive developmental screening, assessment and referral in the past year	children 0-5 with a comprehensive developmental screening in the past year. children 0-5 who received services identified in the screening
More children are healthy and well-nourished	children 0-5 with BMI greater than 85% for their age and gender on CDC BMI charts

2. Improved Family Functioning	
Outcome	**Indicator**
More parents/guardians achieve a higher level of literacy and education	parents participating in literacy, ESOL, GED training or related education
More parents/guardians are involved in systems that affect their child's development and success	ECE programs that have multiple strategies to involve and support parents/guardians
Families are more integrated and connected in their communities	parents (self report) that utilize support systems including family, faith-based, social
More parents/guardians are actively involved in the child's development	children breastfed for the first 6 months children who are read to by a family member/guardian in the past week or engage in other pre-reading activities in the past week mothers with depression (special needs only)
Parents provide nurturing and positive emotional support	mothers screened for and referred for depression parents receiving treatment for depression or other mental health problems
More parents/guardians have the knowledge and skills to support their child's optimal development	parents/guardians who complete a parent education training
Children develop in a safe home	CPS/DV reports families served by programs to reduce exposure to family violence

3. Schools' Readiness for Children	
Outcome	**Indicator**
Increased schools' readiness for children	schools with formal transition plans
	schools with formal linkages to ECE, home visiting, other community resources
	schools with co-training between ECE & K
	transition (child learning _plans in place
	schools/school districts that have established a school readiness department/unit
	school districts that have adopted policies for school readiness
	schools/school districts that have invested Title 1 or other public education funds in the pre-K years
Parent involvement / Empowerment / Advocacy	parents involved in joint planning at service level parents involved in joint planning at level of program planning and evaluation

4. Improved Early Care and Education	
Outcome	**Indicator**
Quality ECE settings in the SR catchment area	ECE settings either accredited and/or ECERs/FDCERS/ITERS attaining a satisfactory score (to be determined during funding process)
	ECE settings that meet or exceed title 5 standards
ECE Enrollment in Quality Programs	3 and 4 year olds enrolled in a center-based ECE program (including child care centers, nursery schools, preschools, Head Start and Pre-K programs)
	licensed child care spaces (FOC + center based) per 100 children
	special needs children enrolled in inclusion model programs children with social/emotional or behavioral issues stabilized in ECE setting
	eligible children enrolled in Head Start or state preschool or equivalent co-located program
Children with age-appropriate competencies	infants and toddlers with developmentally appropriate skills and behaviors in each of the 5 domains of child development as measured with a validated tool three and four year olds with age appropriate skills in each of the 5 domains of child development as measured with a validated tool